

HUMAN EVENTS
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Will the 'Village Voice' Lose Its Pulitzer?

When it was discovered that an eight-year-old heroin addict by the name of "Jimmy" didn't exist, the *Washington Post* returned its Pulitzer Prize and reporter Janet Cooke resigned from the newspaper. The prize was then awarded to Teresa Carpenter, who wrote a series of articles for the leftist weekly New York newspaper, *Village Voice*, about some bizarre murders.

Now, however, one of Teresa Carpenter's stories has come under serious scrutiny. The so-called "Pulitzergate" scandal may not be over.

James A. Wechsler, a columnist for the New York *Post*, has filed a complaint with the National News Council, a media watchdog group, about one of Carpenter's stories that concerned the murder of former Congressman Allard Lowenstein by a one-time associate, Dennis Sweeney. Lowenstein's brother Larry has also filed a complaint with the news council about the same article.

In essence, the complaints charge that the article was deceptive, too heavily based on anonymous sources, and insensitive, since it made serious allegations against a dead man.

For instance, Wechsler notes that one of the passages in the article dealt with reports that Lowenstein once tried to seduce Sweeney. The passage read as follows: "Now, from his cell at Rikers Island, Sweeney denies that they ever had a relationship. Once, while he and Lowenstein were traveling through Mississippi together, they checked into a motel. According to Sweeney, Lowenstein made a pass and Sweeney rebuffed it."

Wechsler says reading that paragraph might lead you to infer that Carpenter had interviewed Sweeney. In fact, as Carpenter now admits, there was no such interview.

The New York *Post* columnist also criticizes Carpenter for reporting unsubstantiated allegations that Lowenstein was once connected with the CIA. Carpenter said in the article that such allegations were just "rumored," but she reported them anyway.

The allegations were mostly based on Lowenstein's former role as president of the National Student Association, which in 1967 was revealed to have been a recipient of CIA support. But as Wechsler points out, the Carpenter piece itself noted that the revelation was that "the CIA had been setting the international agenda of the National Student Association since 1952, one year after Lowenstein stepped down as president" (emphasis added).

Wechsler says that the Carpenter piece was later "reproduced verbatim in, of all places, the *Washington Post*."

"Shortly thereafter, 15 of Lowenstein's former congressional colleagues published a letter in that newspaper declaring, 'The piece purports to be a serious and objective examination of how Dennis Sweeney came to kill Al. But measured against even the loosest journalistic standards, it is grossly deficient. It is devoid of any attributable quotes.... Instead, it is rife with unsubstantiated assertions and gratuitous innuendo.'"

Teresa Carpenter and *Village Voice* Editor David Schneiderman have said they stand by the article, and the *Voice* has reprinted the Sweeney-Lowenstein story, with the statement, "Let the Reader Judge." But the important judgment will come from the National News Council, which may find the *Voice* guilty of the charges Wechsler has made, thus giving the Pulitzer Board yet another black eye.

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